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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Applications for New Awards; Student Support Services
Program**

AGENCY: Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education (Department) is issuing a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2020 for the Student Support Services (SSS) Program, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 84.042A. This notice relates to the approved information collection under OMB control number 1840-0017.

DATES:

Applications Available: **[INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: **[INSERT DATE 40 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: **[INSERT DATE 100 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

ADDRESSES: For the addresses for obtaining and submitting an application, please refer to our Common Instructions for

Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on February 13, 2019 (84 FR 3768), and available at www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-02-13/pdf/2019-02206.pdf.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lavelle Wright, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, room 268-24, Washington, DC 20202-4260. Telephone: (202) 453-7739. Email: Lavelle.Wright@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of the SSS Program is to increase the number of disadvantaged, low-income college students, first-generation college students, and college students with disabilities in the United States who successfully complete a program of study at the postsecondary level. The support services that are provided should increase the retention and graduation rates

for these categories of students and facilitate their transfer from two-year to four-year colleges and universities. The support services should also foster an institutional climate that supports the success of students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are historically underrepresented in postsecondary education, students with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths, students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system, and other disconnected students. Student support services should also improve the financial and economic literacy of students.

Priorities: This notice contains two competitive preference priorities. Competitive Preference Priorities 1 and 2 are from the Secretary's Notice of Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on March 2, 2018 (83 FR 9096) (Supplemental Priorities).

Note: Applicants must include, in the one-page abstract submitted with the application, a statement indicating which, if any, of the competitive preference priorities are addressed. If the applicant has addressed the competitive

preference priorities, this information must also be listed on the SSS Program Profile Form.

Competitive Preference Priorities: For FY 2020 and any subsequent year for which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, these priorities are competitive preference priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i), we award up to an additional five points to an application, depending on how well the application meets these priorities.

These priorities are:

Competitive Preference Priority 1--Fostering Flexible and Affordable Paths to Obtaining Knowledge and Skills (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address improving collaboration between education providers and employers to ensure student learning objectives are aligned with the skills or knowledge required for employment in in-demand industry sectors or occupations (as defined in section 3(23) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014).

Competitive Preference Priority 2--Fostering Knowledge and Promoting the Development of Skills That Prepare

Students To Be Informed, Thoughtful, and Productive
Individuals and Citizens (up to 2 points).

Projects that are designed to address supporting instruction in personal financial literacy, knowledge of markets and economics, knowledge of higher education financing and repayment (e.g., college savings and student loans), or other skills aimed at building personal financial understanding and responsibility.

Note: For both priorities, the Department is sufficiently interested in these topics that we may later seek to partner with successful applicants to conduct research and evaluation.

Definitions: The definitions below are from 34 CFR 77.1(c).

Demonstrates a rationale means a key project component included in the project's logic model is informed by research or evaluation findings that suggest the project component is likely to improve relevant outcomes.

Logic model (also referred to as a theory of action) means a framework that identifies key project components of the proposed project (i.e., the active "ingredients" that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant

outcomes) and describes the theoretical and operational relationships among the key project components and relevant outcomes.

Note: In developing logic models, applicants may want to use resources such as the Regional Educational Laboratory Program's (REL Pacific) Education Logic Model Application, available at

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/elm.asp>,

to help design their logic models. Other sources include:

[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL 2014 025.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014_025.pdf),

[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL 2014 007.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014_007.pdf), and

[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL 20 15057.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2015057.pdf).

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 20 U.S.C. 1070a-14.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75 (except for 75.215 through 75.221), 77, 79, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98 and 99. (b) The Office of Management and Budget Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and

Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485. (c) The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3474. (d) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR part 646. (e) The Supplemental Priorities.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 79 apply to all applicants except federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to institutions of higher education (IHEs) only.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: We intend to use an estimated \$313,849,000 for new SSS awards under this competition.

Note: The President's Budget for FY 2020 requested \$950,000,000 for the Administration's proposal to reform the Federal TRIO programs. The actual level of funding and changes to the program, if any, depend on final congressional action. However, we are inviting applications to allow enough time to complete the grant

process if Congress appropriates funds for the Federal TRIO Programs. Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in subsequent years from the list of unfunded applications from this competition.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$149,482 - \$1,595,544.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$311,977.

Maximum Award: The maximum award varies based on whether the applicant is currently receiving an SSS grant, as well as the type of project and number of students served.

For applicants not currently receiving an SSS Program grant, the maximum awards are as follows:

Type of Proposal	Maximum Amount*
Regular SSS Proposal Serving a Minimum of 140 Student Participants	\$253,032
Regular SSS Proposal Serving a Minimum of 100 Student Participants who are Students with Disabilities	\$253,032
English as a Second Language (ESL) SSS Proposal Serving a Minimum of 140 Student Participants	\$253,032
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Health Science SSS Proposal Serving a Minimum of 120 Student Participants	\$253,032
Teacher Preparation SSS Proposal Serving a Minimum of 140 Student Participants	\$253,032
Veterans SSS Proposal Serving a Minimum of 120 Student Participants	\$253,032

For applicants proposing to serve fewer than the minimum number of student participants specified in the above table, the maximum award is an amount equal to: \$1,807 per student participant for Regular, ESL, and Teacher Preparation proposals; \$2,530 per student participant for projects serving Students with Disabilities (SWD proposals); and \$2,109 per student participant for STEM (including Health Science) and Veterans proposals.

For applicants currently receiving an SSS program grant, the maximum award amount is the greater of (a) \$253,032 or (b) 100 percent of the applicant's base award amount for FY 2019.

For any currently funded applicant that proposes to serve fewer students than it served in FY 2019, the maximum award is the amount that corresponds with the cost per participant previously established for the project in FY 2019.

Estimated Number of New Awards: 1,069.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants: IHEs or combinations of IHEs.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching: Section 402D(d)(4) of the HEA requires that all successful applicants that use SSS Program funds to provide grant aid to students pursuant to section 402D(d)(1) of the HEA must provide matching funds, in cash, from non-Federal funds, in an amount that is not less than 33 percent of the total amount of the SSS Program funds used for this aid. This matching requirement does not apply to a grant recipient that is an IHE eligible to receive funds under part A or part B of title III or under title V of the HEA.

3. Subgrantees: A grantee under this competition may not award subgrants to entities to directly carry out project activities described in its application.

4. Other: An applicant may submit multiple applications if each separate application describes a project that will serve a different campus or a different population (section 402A(c)(5) of the HEA).

Under section 402A(h)(1) of the HEA, the term "different campus" means a site of an IHE that--(a) is

geographically apart from the main campus of the institution; (b) is permanent in nature; and (c) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential.

Under section 402A(h) (2) of the HEA, the term "different population" means a group of individuals that an eligible entity desires to serve through an SSS grant that is separate and distinct from any other population that the entity has applied to serve using Federal TRIO Program funds, or, while sharing some of the same needs as another population that the eligible entity has applied to serve using Federal TRIO Program funds, has distinct needs for specialized services. To implement the requirement in section 402A(h) (2) of the HEA for this competition, the Secretary is designating the populations to be served as: participants who meet the specific requirements for SSS services, participants who are students with disabilities, participants who need ESL services, participants receiving services in the STEM fields, participants receiving Teacher Preparation Services, and participants who have served in the armed forces. These different populations need different types of services. Accordingly, the Secretary

has determined that projects serving these different populations should be subject to different standards for the minimum number of participants. An applicant may submit more than one application as long as each application proposes to serve a different population. For project types other than a regular SSS project, an applicant must propose to serve 100 percent of the students in the specific project type.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Application Submission Instructions: Applicants are required to follow the Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on February 13, 2019 (84 FR 3768), and available at www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-02-13/pdf/2019-02206.pdf, which contain requirements and information on how to submit an application.

2. Intergovernmental Review: This program is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. Information about Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs under Executive Order 12372 is in the application package for this program.

3. Funding Restrictions: We specify unallowable costs in 34 CFR 646.31. We reference additional regulations outlining funding restrictions in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

Requirements concerning the content of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this program.

4. Recommended Page Limit: The application narrative, Part III of the application, is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. We recommend that you (1) limit the application narrative, which includes the budget narrative, to no more than 65 pages and (2) use the following standards:

- A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins.
- Double space all text in the application narrative, and single space titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs.

- Use a 12-point font.
- Use an easily readable font such as Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

The recommended 65-page limit does not apply to Part I, the Application for Federal Assistance cover sheet (SF 424); Part II, the Budget Information Summary form (ED Form 524); Part III-A, the SSS Program Profile form; Part III-B, the one-page Project Abstract form; or Part IV, the assurances and certifications. The recommended page limit also does not apply to a table of contents, which you should include in the application narrative. You must include your complete response to the selection criteria in the application narrative.

We recommend that any application addressing the competitive preference priorities include no more than three additional pages each for priorities 1 and 2, if addressed.

Applications that do not follow the page limit and formatting recommendations will not be penalized.

V. Application Review Information

1. Selection Criteria: The selection criteria for this competition are from 34 CFR 646.21 and 34 CFR 75.210.

We will award up to 105 points to an application under the selection criteria and up to 5 additional points to an application under the competitive preference priorities, for a total score of up to 110 points. The maximum number of points available for each criterion is indicated in parentheses.

(a) *Need for the project* (24 points). The Secretary evaluates the need for an SSS project proposed at the applicant institution on the basis of the extent to which the application contains clear evidence of—

(1) A high number or percentage, or both, of students enrolled or accepted for enrollment at the applicant institution who meet the eligibility requirements of 34 CFR 646.3 (8 points);

(2) The academic and other problems that eligible students encounter at the applicant institution (8 points); and

(3) The differences between eligible SSS students compared to an appropriate group, based on the following indicators:

- (i) Retention and graduation rates.
 - (ii) Grade point averages.
 - (iii) Graduate and professional school enrollment rates (four-year colleges only).
 - (iv) Transfer rates from two-year to four-year institutions (two-year colleges only) (8 points).
- (b) *Objectives* (8 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the applicant's proposed objectives in the following areas on the basis of the extent to which they are both ambitious, as related to the need data provided under paragraph (a) of this section, and attainable, given the project's plan of operation, budget, and other resources.
- (1) Retention in postsecondary education (3 points).
 - (2) In good academic standing at grantee institution (2 points).
 - (3) Two-year institutions only. (i) Certificate or degree completion (1 point); and (ii) Certificate or degree completion and transfer to a four-year institution (2 points).
 - (4) Four-year institutions only. Completion of a baccalaureate degree (3 points).

(c) *Plan of operation* (30 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the applicant's plan of operation on the basis of the following:

(1) The plan to inform the institutional community (students, faculty, and staff) of the goals, objectives, and services of the project and the eligibility requirements for participation in the project (3 points).

(2) The plan to identify, select, and retain project participants with academic need (3 points).

(3) The plan for assessing each individual participant's need for specific services and monitoring his or her academic progress at the institution to ensure satisfactory academic progress (4 points).

(4) The plan to provide services that address the goals and objectives of the project (10 points).

(5) The applicant's plan to ensure proper and efficient administration of the project, including the organizational placement of the project; the time commitment of key project staff; the specific plans for financial management, student records management, and personnel management; and, where appropriate, its plan for

coordination with other programs for disadvantaged students (10 points).

(d) *Institutional commitment* (16 points). The Secretary evaluates the institutional commitment to the proposed project on the basis of the extent to which the applicant has—

(1) Committed facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, and other resources to supplement the grant and enhance project services (6 points);

(2) Established administrative and academic policies that enhance participants' retention at the institution and improve their chances of graduating from the institution (6 points);

(3) Demonstrated a commitment to minimize the dependence on student loans in developing financial aid packages for project participants by committing institutional resources to the extent possible (2 points); and

(4) Assured the full cooperation and support of the Admissions, Student Aid, Registrar and data collection and analysis components of the institution (2 points).

(e) *Quality of personnel* (9 points). To determine the quality of personnel the applicant plans to use, the Secretary looks for information that shows—

(1) The qualifications required of the project director, including formal education and training in fields related to the objectives of the project, and experience in designing, managing, or implementing SSS or similar projects (3 points);

(2) The qualifications required of other personnel to be used in the project, including formal education, training, and work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project (3 points); and

(3) The quality of the applicant's plan for employing personnel who have succeeded in overcoming barriers similar to those confronting the project's target population (3 points).

(f) *Budget* (5 points). The Secretary evaluates the extent to which the project budget is reasonable, cost-effective, and adequate to support the project.

(g) *Evaluation plan* (8 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the evaluation plan for the project on the basis of the extent to which—

(1) The applicant's methods for evaluation—

(i) Are appropriate to the project and include both quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures (2 points); and

(ii) Examine in specific and measurable ways, using appropriate baseline data, the success of the project in improving academic achievement, retention and graduation of project participants (2 points); and

(2) The applicant intends to use the results of an evaluation to make programmatic changes based upon the results of project evaluation (4 points).

(h) *Quality of the project design* (5 points). In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in this notice).

Note: Under the "Objectives" selection criterion in paragraph (b) above, applicants must address the standardized objectives in 34 CFR 646.21(b)(1) through (4) related to the participants' academic achievements, including retention, good academic standing, graduation, and transfer rates. The graduation objective should be

measured by cohorts of students who become SSS Program participants in each year of the project and should be compared to a relevant and valid comparison group. The graduation, certificate, and transfer rates for two-year institutions should be measured over a four-year period and that of four-year institutions should be measured over a six-year period.

2. Review and Selection Process: We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.217(d)(3), the past performance of the applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.

In addition, in making a competitive grant award, the Secretary requires various assurances, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal

financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

For this competition, a panel of non-Federal reviewers will review each application in accordance with the selection criteria in 34 CFR 646.21, 34 CFR 75.210, and the competitive preference priorities. The individual scores of the reviewers will be added and the sum divided by the number of reviewers to determine the peer review score received in the review process. Additionally, in accordance with 34 CFR 646.22, the Secretary will award prior experience points to applicants that have conducted an SSS Program project within the last three Federal government fiscal years, based on their documented experience. Prior experience points, if any, will be added to the application's averaged reader score to determine the total score for each application. If there are insufficient funds for all applications with the same total scores, the Secretary will choose among the tied applications so as to serve geographical areas that have been underserved by the SSS Program.

3. Risk Assessment and Specific Conditions:

Consistent with 2 CFR 200.205, before awarding grants under

this competition, the Department conducts a review of the risks posed by applicants. Under 2 CFR 3474.10, the Secretary may impose specific conditions and, in appropriate circumstances, high-risk conditions on a grant if the applicant or grantee is not financially stable; has a history of unsatisfactory performance; has a financial or other management system that does not meet the standards in 2 CFR part 200, subpart D; has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant; or is otherwise not responsible.

4. Integrity and Performance System: If you are selected under this competition to receive an award that over the course of the project period may exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), under 2 CFR 200.205(a)(2), we must make a judgment about your integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards--that is, the risk posed by you as an applicant--before we make an award. In doing so, we must consider any information about you that is in the integrity and performance system (currently referred to as the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)), accessible through the System for Award Management. You may review and comment on any information

about yourself that a Federal agency previously entered and that is currently in FAPIIS.

Please note that, if the total value of your currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from the Federal Government exceeds \$10,000,000, the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, require you to report certain integrity information to FAPIIS semiannually. Please review the requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, if this grant plus all the other Federal funds you receive exceed \$10,000,000.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices: If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN); or we may send you an email containing a link to access an electronic version of your GAN. We may notify you informally, also.

If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we notify you.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements: We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other

requirements in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

3. Open Licensing Requirements: Unless an exception applies, if you are awarded a grant under this competition, you will be required to openly license to the public grant deliverables created in whole, or in part, with Department grant funds. When the deliverable consists of modifications to pre-existing works, the license extends only to those modifications that can be separately identified and only to the extent that open licensing is permitted under the terms of any licenses or other legal restrictions on the use of pre-existing works. Additionally, a grantee or subgrantee that is awarded competitive grant funds must have a plan to disseminate these public grant deliverables. This dissemination plan can be developed and submitted after your application has

been reviewed and selected for funding. For additional information on the open licensing requirements please refer to 2 CFR 3474.20.

4. Reporting: (a) If you apply for a grant under this competition, you must ensure that you have in place the necessary processes and systems to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170 should you receive funding under the competition. This does not apply if you have an exception under 2 CFR 170.110(b).

(b) At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multiyear award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html.

(c) Under 34 CFR 75.250(b), the Secretary may provide a grantee with additional funding for data collection

analysis and reporting. In this case the Secretary establishes a data collection period.

5. Performance Measures: The success of the SSS Program is measured by the percentage of SSS participants that complete a program of postsecondary education. The following performance measures have been developed to track progress toward achieving program success:

(a) The percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen SSS Program participants who are still enrolled at the beginning of the next academic year or have earned a degree at a two-year grantee institution or transferred from a two-year to a four-year institution.

(b) The percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen SSS participants at four-year institutions who received a bachelor's degree from the grantee institution (Note: The Department will calculate this measure based both on 100 percent and 150 percent of normal completion time).

(c) The percentage of first-time, full-time SSS participants at two-year institutions who received an associate's degree and/or transferred to a four-year institution (Note: The Department will calculate this

measure based both on 100 percent and 150 percent of normal completion time).

(d) The cost per successful outcome.

All SSS Program grantees are required to submit an annual performance report documenting the persistence and degree attainment of their participants. Since students take different amounts of time to complete their degrees, multiple years of performance report data are needed to determine the degree completion rates of SSS Program participants. The Department will aggregate the data provided in the annual performance reports from all grantees to determine the overall program accomplishment level.

6. Continuation Awards: In making a continuation award under 34 CFR 75.253, the Secretary considers, among other things: whether a grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the project; whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget; and, if the Secretary has established performance measurement requirements, the performance targets in the grantee's approved application.

In making a continuation award, the Secretary also considers whether the grantee is operating in compliance with the assurances in its approved application, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

VII. Other Information

Accessible Format: Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) on request to the program contact person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the document published in the *Federal Register*. You may access the official edition of the *Federal Register* and the Code of Federal Regulations at www.govinfo.gov. At this site you can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the *Federal Register*, in text or Portable Document

Format (PDF). To use PDF, you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at the site.

You may also access documents of the Department published in the *Federal Register* by using the article search feature at www.federalregister.gov. Specifically, through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

Robert L. King,

Assistant Secretary for

Postsecondary Education.

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